



NEWS RELEASE

Niagara-on-the-Lake Responds to Proposed Amalgamation

For Immediate Release

February 25, 2026

At the February 24, 2026, Council Meeting, Regional Chair Bob Gale provided an update and took part in a discussion period with Niagara-on-the-Lake Town Council regarding a potential amalgamation of the twelve Niagara Region municipalities into a four-city or one-city model. The full discussion from Tuesday's Council meeting is available via the [Town's livestream recording](#), with the agenda item beginning at approximately the 32:36 mark.

Chair Gale confirmed that he contacted Minister Flack on February 19 to initiate outreach regarding a governance review. Local area Mayors received correspondence the same day advising that feedback from each municipality is requested by March 3, 2026.

At this time, no formal business case, financial model, service delivery review, or operational impact study has been presented publicly.

"Any conversation about restructuring local government must begin with evidence," said Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa. "We appreciate the residents who showed up and took the time to listen to this important discussion. Council Members came prepared with deep, thoughtful questions and did their research in advance of the meeting. That level of diligence reflects how seriously we are taking this matter on behalf of our community."

Council unanimously supported submitting formal feedback to Chair Gale and the Province opposing amalgamation and advocating for the protection of Niagara-on-the-Lake's municipal independence.

"What is increasingly clear is that the assertions lack supporting facts and evidence," added Lord Mayor Zalepa. "Rather than continuing down a flawed path or promising potential tax reductions without a documented financial analysis, it would be far more productive for the Region and local area municipalities to engage in an evidence-based



review of how services can be delivered most effectively to Niagara residents. Forced amalgamation is not something our communities have asked for.”

Niagara-on-the-Lake is recognized as a high-performing municipality with strong financial stewardship, a distinct global brand, and a lean, agile service delivery model tailored to the community’s needs.

Council expressed concern that amalgamation could risk redistribution of Niagara-on-the-Lake’s tax base, dilute local representation, and impact service levels that are currently responsive and community-focused.

“Niagara-on-the-Lake is not just another municipality,” noted the Lord Mayor. “We are a globally recognized community with a distinct identity and significant agricultural lands that reflect our size and character. Protecting that identity matters.”

To ensure focus and alignment during this period, Council has established a working group to support Staff as the Town prepares its response.

The following Councillors have been appointed:

- Councillor Tim Balasiuk
- Councillor Sandra O’Connor
- Councillor Wendy Cheropita
- Deputy Lord Mayor Erwin Wiens

The working group will meet regularly with senior Staff and report back to the full Council, ensuring municipal resources and Staff time remain focused on key priorities while the Province considers next steps.

The Town will submit its formal feedback to the Province by March 3, 2026, as requested by Chair Gale. The public is also being called upon to provide feedback. Correspondence can be submitted to the Regional Chair’s office via email at bob.gale@niagararegion.ca

Council reaffirmed its commitment to transparency and to advocating for residents and taxpayers throughout this process.

“Council has chosen a clear course of action that includes meaningful engagement with the Niagara-on-the-Lake community. We look forward to presenting documented facts



and a concise, evidence-based position that reflects the best interests of our Town,” concluded Lord Mayor Zalepa.

“We will continue to communicate frequently with our community,” said CAO Nick Ruller. “As more information becomes available, we will ensure residents understand what is being proposed, what it means, and how their voices can be heard.”

Further updates will be provided as new information is received.

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Media Contact:

Marah Minor, Corporate Communications Lead
905-468-3266 | communications@notl.com